



**Alberta  
Cattle  
Commission**

# GRASS ROUTES

*The Alberta cattle producer newsletter.*

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## Producers can protect water quality

### *Industry needs to examine cow wintering practices*

In 1992, the Alberta Cattle Commission (ACC) retained a group of consultants to carry out an environmental risk assessment of the beef cattle industry to identify areas of concern and also where the industry was performing well.

The risk assessment identified four environmental issues that cattle producers need to be concerned about: ensuring good range condition, protecting riparian areas, ensuring the proper location and management of intensive livestock operations, and ensuring that cattle wintering areas are located and managed in a way that minimizes the potential for surface water contamination - especially during spring run-off.

The last issue was recently brought to center stage as a result of a complaint from a water treatment plant in west central Alberta. The Anthony Henday plant, which provides water to a number of towns along the west side of the number two highway, has been experiencing high levels of contamination from the Red Deer river during the period of spring run-off.

As a result of their complaint, Alberta Environmental Protection surveyed the catchment area and decided that at least part of the problem was coming from cattle being wintered along the Medicine and Little Red Deer rivers. While the department does have the power to require anyone polluting surface water to remove the source of pollution, officials

decided that they would prefer to work with cattle producers to get a better fix on the extent of the problem and to explore ways in which it could be reduced.

It is important that cattle producers realize that this is not a problem confined to those living on the catchment of the Red Deer river. Environmental Protection has complaints from across the province about contamination of water supplies with manure and other livestock waste during spring run-off. These complaints come from towns and cities as well as from farmers and other rural residents living downstream. Contamination can originate anywhere in the catchment and is not necessarily confined to operations located on a stream or river.

As a result, the ACC along with other producer organizations is working with the department and Alberta Agriculture to do three things. First, we want to determine the extent of the problem and especially other sources of contamination. Secondly, we want to make all cattle producers aware that this is becoming an increasing issue as our population grows and as the demand for adequate supplies of clean water increase. Finally we want to be able to provide advice on how producers can make relatively simple and cheap changes to the location and management of their wintering operations to reduce the extent to which manure and other pollutants get into lakes, creeks and rivers.

## **Did you know?**

*There are approximately 120 animal rights organizations across Canada. The most militant and dangerous of these is the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) which has been most active in Alberta.*

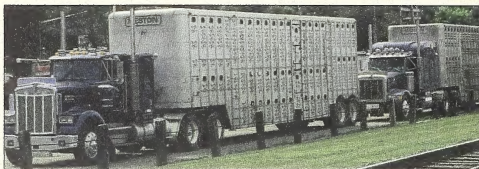
**Strength** *from the* **ground up.**

See **Protect water quality**, Page 2



## Food science students learn about beef

An innovative program called *Beef in the Classroom* designed to teach high school food science students about beef was offered in Edmonton and Calgary high schools. A home economist reviewed the nutritional benefits of beef, discussed the various cuts of meat, highlighted different cooking methods and concluded the class by preparing a demonstration dish. Students were encouraged to ask questions throughout the presentation. A wide variety of recipe and nutritional brochures were left behind for future reference. This was the *Beef in the Classroom* program's second year and it may be expanded to other Alberta centers in the future.



## Export levy rebate discontinued

The Alberta Cattle Commission (ACC) will discontinue the export levy rebate program on cattle exported to the United States as of June 30, 1994.

The export levy rebate program was implemented in 1987 to offset the additional cost of marketing cattle into the United States by recognizing that two check-offs were being paid by the producer - the first was the U.S. check-off inherent in the price bid by the dealer and the second when the ACC check-off was deducted. The ACC reviewed the structure of this program with exporting dealers and industry organizations during the spring. The Alberta Cattle Feeders' Association board has endorsed the change.

The review determined that the increased competitiveness of the industry resulted in the U.S. check-off no longer being factored into dealer bids on live cattle. These changes have made the export levy rebate program unnecessary with respect to its original mandate. Cattle sold up to and including June 30 will remain eligible for a refund under the program if the request is submitted to the ACC office by December 31, 1994.

In conjunction with the program discontinuation, there have been some changes to how the check-off is applied on cattle exported to the United States. The rules effective June 30, 1994 are as follows:

### 1. Live cattle sales to U.S. packers

When a dealer is buying cattle on behalf of an

American packing plant on a prearranged commission, is not exposed to any risk and the packer can reasonably be assumed to have received ownership at the time of sale, the ACC check-off would apply to the transaction between the producer and the dealer.

### 2. Live cattle sales in Alberta

When a dealer is buying the cattle from a producer without a prearranged commission structure and is subsequently selling those animals to the highest bidder, and therefore speculating on cattle, the sale by the producer is subject to the ACC check-off and so is the sale by the dealer if the cattle are resold in Alberta.

### 3. Direct sales to U.S. packers for rail grade settlement

When cattle are owned by a feedlot or dealer, and the point of sale is not in Alberta, then no ACC check-off needs to be remitted on that transaction. The point of sale is deemed to be where the cattle are weighed.

### 4. Rail grade settlement at U.S. packing plants through a dealer

When the price being paid to the producer is determined on the basis of a rail grade settlement at a packing plant in the United States, then the sale is deemed to have taken place in the United States and therefore, the ACC check-off is not required to be deducted.

## Producers can protect water quality, continued

Environmental Protection will continue to try and quantify the extent to which cattle wintering operations are contaminating surface water supplies and to identify other sources of pollution. While it is easy to finger cattle operations, it may well be that the real problems lie elsewhere.

It is generally thought that once cattle producers become aware that there is a potential problem, most will be able to make relatively simple changes to address it. These include changes to the location of the wintering areas, moving feeding away from areas where run-off occurs, reducing access to stream

banks and confining cattle to specific watering spots. In specific cases, it may be necessary to construct berms or other structures to ensure that manure and waste does not wash into the stream system.

The ACC hopes to cooperate with Environmental Protection to produce extension material to assist producers in assessing the environmental impact of their wintering practices and to suggest improvements. For more information on this issue contact ACC delegate Don Curtice, 227-2511, or Brian West, animal waste management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, 340-7607.





## AFAC works on producers' behalf

### Producer Resource Teams

A recent incident regarding improper animal care presented the Alberta Foundation for Animal Care (AFAC) with an opportunity to test its concept of non-confrontational settlement.

When asked by the Alberta SPCA to become involved in a situation requiring intervention and action, AFAC stepped in to talk producer-to-producer. The issue was handled responsibly and quickly.

Is this a model for future AFAC involvement? "AFAC recognizes that the industry itself has a duty to set, monitor and encourage high standards for responsible animal care," says AFAC Chairman

Randy Archibald. "We cannot afford to ignore or defend inhumane treatment."

With this in mind, AFAC is developing an animal care action line and resource team (ALERT) which promotes a conciliatory, producer-to-producer approach to addressing issues of improper animal care in rural Alberta. An 1-800 Animal Care Action Line is part of the ALERT early warning system.

The ALERT teams will assist and counsel producers with management problems to ensure acceptable standards of animal care are practiced.

### Humane Transportation Legislation

AFAC has been given the opportunity to initiate a series of regional consultations that will feed into a national review of livestock and poultry transportation.

The review, initiated by Agriculture Canada, will lead to a program that gives Canada a solid, world-respected transportation and compliance program. AFAC's recommendations will help form the framework for Canada's new humane transportation of animals system.

A well-defined humane transportation of animals program is a necessary component in the whole humane animal care system promoted by AFAC and its provincial affiliates.

## Research improves production methods

Veterinary Infectious Disease Organization (VIDO) and the ACC are conducting research to improve animal health management through:

- reduced drug use in cattle that are not sick or are beyond salvage,
- more accurate disease identification and treatment,
- measurement of effectiveness of health management practices such as vaccination, and
- improved pre-slaughter meat inspection.

VIDO researchers are developing tests to measure cytokines and acute phase proteins (APP), the very first chemical messengers telling a body that a disease is present or an injury has occurred.

Using the shipping fever complex of diseases as a starting point, VIDO's team has shown that measuring APP plus blood zinc is an earlier, better indicator of when to initiate drug treatment. APP and blood zinc levels also vary with disease severity allowing producers to identify those animals to treat thus reducing herd treatment costs.

With further research VIDO is determining if each disease organism produces a unique cytokine profile. If so, highly accurate diagnostic tests can be developed. Other research is being undertaken to develop chute side tests using this technology.

## Come to the semi annual meeting

The Alberta Cattle Commission (ACC) is holding its semi annual meeting in Red Deer, June 22-23, in conjunction with the Alberta Beef Congress. Central Alberta producers should look for the ACC supermarket and restaurant promotions the week of June 20. All cattle producers are invited to attend the semi annual meeting. For more information call the ACC office at 275-4400.

## New beef advertising results in

For the second consecutive year, the Beef Information Centre has used Olympic athletes in beef advertising. Beef ads ran on television for 15 weeks including two weeks during the Olympics. The annual tracking study found that television awareness was up 4 per cent overall and is now at 60 per cent. Awareness was up significantly in both Vancouver (12 per cent) and Montreal (16 per cent).

## New beef product launched

Taste is beef's number one strength. Combine beef with the fastest growing ethnic food trend which is Mexican and you should have a real winner.

That is what Centennial hopes with their new product, Taco Nuggets. Taco Nuggets are 85 per cent lean ground beef with a unique corn coating providing crunch, taste and texture.

Centennial has just launched this foodservice product nationally. For the past few months Taco Nuggets have been in test markets in Regina, Saskatoon and Vancouver.

Centennial is working on a cooked Taco Nugget product for retail launch in September. Optimism is high that Taco Nuggets will be a hit with consumers.





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## Government increases offshore beef import quotas

The federal government recently increased the quota rate tariff for imported offshore beef by 13,000 tonnes for a yearly total of 85,000 tonnes - surtax free. The Canadian Cattlemen's Association (CCA) contends that the original limit of 72,021 tonnes was more than adequate.

The increase was granted as a result of strong political pressure by the Australians and Canadian meat importers. Offshore imports are running 47 per cent ahead of last year's record levels and the original quota was filled in May. The Canadian Meat Importers Committee has lobbied to suspend the 25 per cent surtax and increase the current quota to 114,000 tonnes for 1994.

The federal government maintains that the increase was a one-time adjustment to balance the interests of boneless beef users and Canadian cattle producers.

## Creating a vision for a dynamic and profitable industry

A working group of producers, packers and government officials has been examining key issues facing the industry to identify areas of opportunity and improvement. Out of this process a vision statement was developed: *to have Canadian high quality beef products recognized as the world's best by both Canadian and international customers.*

The CCA held an industry planning workshop in Calgary to mobilize the industry into action. Fifty producers, packers, retailers and foodservice players met to establish priorities for research and policy which will also assist in directing the use of industry development funds generated from the termination of the National Tripartite Stabilization Program.

The workshop set an objective of reaching a 95 per cent consumer satisfaction rating in tenderness (consumer tests suggest we are currently 15 to 20 per cent below this level). The CCA will develop a detailed action plan for its September convention.

Implementation of an instrument grading system, a birth to slaughter animal identification system, closer buyer-supplier relationships, and improved food safety and inspection methods were also identified as necessary actions.

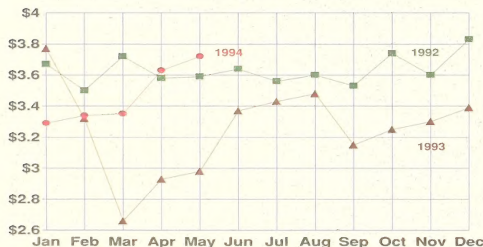
## Changes to Bluetongue regulations

*The CCA, representatives from the pure-bred beef, dairy, sheep, genetic exporters sectors, government, and American industry recently met to discuss changes to Canada's Bluetongue regulations. All participants supported the proposal based on sound scientific analysis. The next step is formal industry review of the draft regulatory changes.*

## Market Watch by:



### Retail Beef Prices - Edmonton average of 6 cuts



Source: Alberta Agriculture, Canfax

### MONTHLY AVERAGES FOR ALBERTA

prices in (\$/cwt)	May average	April average	change	May 93 average	change
FED STEERS	86.01	94.09	-8.08	94.60	-8.59
FED HEIFERS	85.15	92.77	-7.62	92.99	-7.84
<b>FEEDER STEERS</b>					
300 - 400 lbs	145.13	150.54	-5.41	136.04	+9.09
400 - 500	139.96	144.04	-4.08	131.29	+8.67
500 - 600	133.85	137.89	-4.04	124.58	+9.27
600 - 700	125.08	129.10	-4.02	117.51	+7.57
700 - 800	114.53	118.86	-4.33	111.17	+3.36
800 - 900	103.35	108.61	-5.26	104.15	-0.80
900 +	95.07	100.65	-5.58	97.61	-2.54
<b>FEEDER HEIFERS</b>					
300 - 400 lbs	132.75	138.29	-5.54	123.94	+8.81
400 - 500	129.31	131.79	-2.48	118.94	+10.64
500 - 600	123.09	126.44	-3.35	113.83	+9.26
600 - 700	114.21	119.42	-5.21	108.82	+5.39
700 - 800	107.20	111.03	-3.83	103.65	+3.55
800 +	98.00	102.24	-4.24	97.54	+0.46

CANFAX is a non profit market information service that offers its members detailed weekly and monthly market reports and a member-only hotline to get up to the minute information. For more information call Anne or Keith at 275-5110.

### ACC Market Information Service

Slaughter Cattle Information 274-4340  
Feeder Cattle Information 274-4345

The Alberta Cattle Commission 216, 6715 - 8th St. N.E. Calgary,  
AB T2E 7H7 275-4400 Mail Registration Number 116432